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Contact: **PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE**

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Phone: **(217) 373-6714**

Construction Engineering Research Laboratory • P.O. Box 9005 • Champaign, IL 61826-9005 • http://www.erdc.usace.army.mil

Corps of Engineers Awards $2.5M Fuel Cell Backup Project

CHAMPAIGN, Ill. - The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Engineer Research and Development Center, Construction Engineering Research Laboratory (CERL) announce the award of more than 200 kilowatts in fuel cell backup power across nine federal installations. This competitive CERL acquisition was awarded to LOGANEnergy Corporation of Georgia. LOGANEnergy will manage the project using fuel cells from four manufacturers; ReliOn, Inc. of Washington, Altergy Systems® of California, Idatech, LLC of Oregon, and Hydrogenics Corporation of California..

Eight Department of Defense installations will receive emergency fuel cell backup power units: Fort Bragg, N.C., Fort Hood, Tex., the U.S Military Academy at West Point, N.Y., Aberdeen Proving Ground, Md., Picatinny Arsenal, N.J., Cheyenne Mountain Air Force Base, Colo., U.S. Marine Corps Air Ground Combat Center 29 Palms, Calif., and the Ohio National Guard. The National Aeronautical and Space Administration's (NASA) Ames Research Center at Moffett Field, Calif., will be the ninth installation. These sites were chosen as a result of responses received from a joint CERL-Department of Energy (DOE) call for projects. Twenty-four buildings will receive mission-critical backup power. The U.S. Army Tank Automotive Research, Development, and Engineering Center will host a series of fuel cell users groups throughout these deployments to share experiences and facilitate the exchange of lessons learned.

Polymer electrolyte membrane fuel cell systems can be twice as efficient as internal combustion engines and are much quieter and cleaner with little or no greenhouse gas emissions. Fuel cells can also offer extended runs limited only by the fuel supply.

"This project provides an opportunity to evaluate quiet, non-polluting fuel cells for a specific application – backup power," said Nicholas Josefik, CERL project manager. "These fuel cells can provide energy security and increase mission performance at these facilities."

The DOE Fuel Cell Technologies Program funded the majority of this $2.5M cost-shared effort, using authorities under the Environmental Policy Act of 2005, Section 783, which allows cost sharing with federal agencies to spur early markets for fuel cells. CERL will manage the project and DOE's National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL) will collect performance data for the first two years of this five-year demonstration. NREL data will be used to inform the fuel cell original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) as well as potential commercial and government adopters of this technology through widespread information dissemination.

The fuel cells will be installed starting around June 2011. They will operate for five years with an option for the host sites to fund an extension at that time.

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